CI: The Magical Journey

Transitioning from a grammar or theme based curriculum to a comprehensible input model

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Why switch to a comprehensible input-based model?

* We observed that in a strictly grammar or theme-based model students could pass test but not communicate in the target language
* We wanted to use the language 90+% in the classroom from day 1
* We heard great things about it and wanted to try it out
* It makes sense!

How we did it while still adhering to a theme-based curriculum

* Look at unit vocabulary and determine what is actually useful language for communication
* Base lessons on meaning and exposure to the vocabulary, not on rules or accuracy (the brain takes care of this on its own over time)
* Use quick grammar “pop ups” to explain grammar, then move on
* Teach the vocabulary through translation, repetition (75-100 times per phrase), and usage in different contexts
* Use Total Physical Response (TPR), stories, readings, and other CI activities to teach the unit vocabulary in more interesting ways
* Emphasis is no longer on grammatical accuracy or rule knowledge but on comprehension and communication

Activities to get started

* The Password: A useful or fun phrase in the target language that students must use to get into class every day
* Personalized Question and Answer (PQA): use target vocabulary to ask students questions
* TPRS: Create short stories with the students using target vocabulary
* Use the stories to ask questions, create readings, play games and ultimately get repetitions of the words students should be acquiring
* Special Person interviews/Star of the week: Learning about individual students in the target language using the vocabulary that the teacher believes is important or needs emphasis
* Storyboards: Using drawings or pictures to illustrate a story and have students create captions for the pictures. Lots of activities can derive from a good storyboard.
* MovieTalk or PictureTalk: Using videos or pictures as opportunities to use target language from your units
* Games: Telestrations, Grudge Ball, Quizlet Live
* Novels: Readers written by CI teachers for language learners.

Conclusions after using CI for a year

* Better relationships with students. More student centered and more fun
* More students are engaged and LEARNING
* More meaningful communication is taking place
* More laughter and fun
* Grammatical accuracy is gradually appearing over time. Some get it faster than others, and that’s OK.
* Classroom management requires adjustments in a CI classroom.
* Very teacher-centric. Teacher is very active asking questions and guiding the class. Can be tiring.

Comprehensible Input resources to get started with

* Martina Bex (https://martinabex.com)
* Bryce Hedstrom (<http://www.brycehedstrom.com/free-stuff>)
* Blaine Ray
* Ben Slavic (<http://www.benslavic.com/>)
* IF/ILCT
* TPRS publishing
* Senorwooly.com (Spanish only)

**Story with target structures: Needs, has, gives**

Carmen needs a **calculator** (*here students can choose what the person needs. This increases interest in the story*)

Carmen: “I don’t have a calculator! I need a calculator!”

John has a calculator. John has **35** calculators. *(Again, students can choose how many he has to make it more interesting)*

John: “I have a calculator. I have **35** calculators.”

Michael needs a calculator too.

Michael: “I don’t have a calculator! I need a calculator!”

John gives a calculator to Carmen.

“I have a calculator! Thanks John!”

John does not give a calculator to Michael.

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After making a story, you can give the students embedded readings to get more repetitions of the target language, to add more cognates and vocabulary, and to model syntax, grammar, etc. After this you can do some of the fun follow up activities listed under the” Activities to get started” heading

**Embedded readings with the story:**

* First version: Give students the story frame with the details they came up with filled in. (Simple, takes no time to write up)
* Second version: Add cognates to the text, a few more advanced sentences and read as a class so that students can establish meaning.
* Third version: Build on second version with more cognates and additional unit vocabulary. Add plot twists, new characters, more complex sentence structures.

**Embedded reading 1:**

Carmen doesn’t have a calculator. Carmen needs a calculator.

“I don’t have a calculator! I need a calculator!”

John has a calculator. John has thirty five calculators.

“I have thirty five calculators”

Michael doesn’t have a calculator. Michael needs a calculator, also.

“I don’t have a calculator! I need a calculator!”

John gives a calculator to Carmen.

John does not give a calculator to Michael.

**Embedded reading 2:**

Carmen, an intelligent student in math class, has a problem. She doesn’t have a calculator. She needs a calculator because she has an exam today in math class.

“I don’t have a calculator! I have an exam in math class and I don’t have a calculator! I need a calculator immediately!”

John, a popular and generous student in math class, has a calculator. He has lots of calculators. He has thirty five calculators. John gives calculators to his friends **because** he is generous.

“I have lots of calculators. I don’t need **more** calculators **because** I have thirty five calculators.”

Michael needs a calculator too, but he doesn’t have a calculator. But Michael isn’t intelligent. He needs a calculator badly. Math class is difficult for Michael.

“I don’t have a calculator! I have an exam in math class and I don’t have a calculator! I need a calculator!”

John gives Carmen a calculator because he is generous.

“Perfect! I have a calculator! Thanks, John!”

John does not give Michael a calculator **because** Michael a car and John does not have a car.

Carmen has a new friend named John. Michael has a new enemy named John.

\* **because** was added to show students how to make a more complex sentence. You would need to establish meaning of the word because before having students read this, or put a footnote at the bottom of the page with a translation of because.